

Chinese In Genesis

20230423

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Morning brothers and sisters, last Dec. in my sermon "Name of God", I said I will preach on Chinese in Genesis. Reason is because

So today I am going to explain some of the Chinese words through Bible's perspective. Please note, I am not explaining Bible through Chinese words perspective, but from Bible to explain Chinese words.

Before I start, how many of you remember the meaning of our GOD, YHWH?

The first time I linked China with Bible was when I read about Passover in Exodus. I find passover is so familiar. The elements in Passover can be found in Chinese Chunjie (Spring Festival). In Passover, Hebrews need to paint blood of lamb on door post and frame, Chinese need to put up Chunlian. Hebrews were asked to stay at home, eat the meal, because Angel of God would kill first born of Egyptians; Chinese too stay at home, eat meal, because there is a beast out there killing people if you are found. Both festivals are in the first month of each calendar year, both are in the spring.

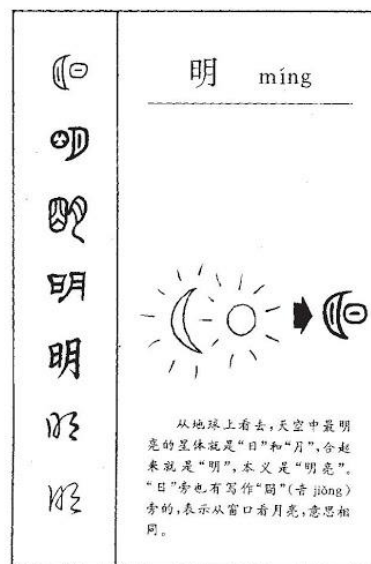
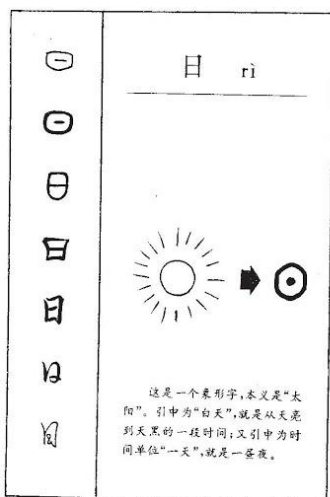
Hebrew is written from right to left, same traditionally Chinese are written from right to left. I think Japanese too.

Bible told us that we all spoke same language, until Tower of Babel. Genesis 11 told us, God confused their language, so that they couldn't understand each other. Chinese as one of the oldest language being used till today, will it carry some trace of original language that people all spoke in Genesis 11? If so, will it carry some message of the beginning?

Chinese is Hieroglyphs. I think it might be the only hieroglyphs language used in present days. It is commonly accepted a person named Cang Jie created the Chinese words. He lived about 4,000 -5,000 years ago.

Oracle is the oldest Chinese we can find today. It's dated back to 17th to 11th Century BC. Which is about 3,000-3,700 years before. It is closest to the original words Cang Jie created. Most of the words I use for today are from Oracle.

Let's have a look of some of Chinese words and how it forms.



Let's start and have a look what happened in Eden. In the story of Eden, there are few key elements. God, Adam and Eve (man and woman), 2 trees, and the snake.

God

In Oracle it is like this

字形演变				
甲骨文	金文		篆文	隶书
				
铁 163·4	宗周钟	宁葛	说文解字	曹全碑

国学堂之说文解字

There are mainly 2 explanation of how this word is formed. One is lightening, which is commonly accepted, and one is more recently saying it is a knot. I personally more prefer the first explanation, because when God started his creation, first thing he did is divide the darkness and light.

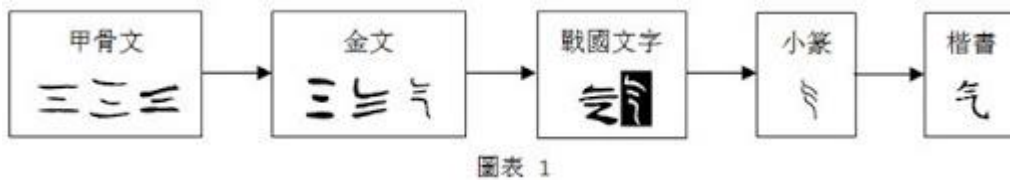
Let us see some other elements in the beginning.

Water



This is easy to understand, it is like flowing water.

“6Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.”



This means “air”, it is like water. But in horizontal. Likes like water but separated.

Now move on to the story of the Tree.



This is very easy to read.

16And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Gen 2:16 - 17)

The only thing God forbid Adam and Eve to eat was the fruit of knowledge of good and evil.

1. Forbid



会意字。从示，古文字形体像供桌，表示鬼神；从林，森林是鬼神活动之地，不可随意进入。本义是不准、制止。
 ①jìn ①不准；制止；~止 | ~赌 | 严~。②禁止的事：犯~。③关押；拘押：~闭 | 囚~。④皇帝居住的地方：~苑。
 ②jīn ①承受：~受 | 弱不~风。②忍住：情不自~ | 忍俊不~。
 ①~地 ~绸 ~忌 ~戒 ~令 ~区 ~书 ~欲
 查~ 监~ 解~ 软~ 失~ 违~ 宵~ 幽~



This word has 2 parts, upper part are 2 trees, lower part means “revelation” which takes form of an altar. It comes from that people get revelation from offering sacrifice to God/gods. If we look at this words from Genesis story, does it remind you something? Apart from fruit of tree of knowledge, later on God set cherubim to guard the tree of life. So 2 trees, that were forbidden from the reach of people.

As God forbid Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of knowledge of good and evil. They need to Discipline themselves.



Discipline in Chinese is a picture of a mouth and a tree. Isn't it interesting, that God's discipline to Adam and Eve is that, only fruit of 1 tree knowledge that they shall not eat.

The first temptation

1Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” (Gen 3:1)

它 (牠) tā [附]蛇 shé			甲骨文
			金文
“它”是“蛇”的本字。《说文》：“它，虫也。从虫而长，象宛曲垂尾形。上古舜[草]居患它，故相问：‘无它乎？’。蛇，它或从虫。”《玉篇》：“它，蛇也。”后多用作代词。简化字把“它”、“牠”合并为“它”。		小篆	隶书
		楷书	草书
		行书	简化字
		(同楷书)	

This “it”, in Chinese is taken a form of a snake. As a matter of fact, in oracle, “snake” and “it”, was written in the same way. It was only many years later, it was separated. But if we look at “it” from Bible, it also offers an even more convincing explanation. “it” refers to a non human third party, in the garden, apart from Adam and Eve, there was a

“it” and this “it” was a snake. Why did Cang Jie use snake to mean “it”. Did he know that in the Garden of Eden, it was the “it”, the snake that seduced Eve eating the fruit?

Let’s move on. Eve was tempted and ate the fruit, why, because she wanted to be like God. Greedy led her to sin.

Greed



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This word has 2 parts. 2 trees on the top, and a woman under it. What are the 2 trees that God said Adam and Eve can’t eat their fruit? Interesting it is a woman under the trees. Why? Why 2 trees? Not other valuable things, like lamb, fish, ox, or rice, wheat? Why it is a woman? Not a man, or other living creatures? From Bible it is all clear.

The consequence of eating the fruit is death.



In Chinese 喪 means death. This is a very interesting word, because there are 2 versions, both versions have tree, but one has 2 mouths, the other has 3 mouths. Whether it is 2 mouths or 3 mouths, Bible has the perfect explanation. 2 people ate the fruit, the “it” used his words to deceive Eve.

God’s Judgement

女

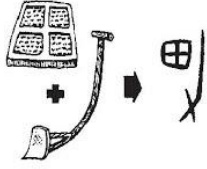
16To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you.” (Genesis 3: 16)

𡚦 𡚧 𡚨 𡚩 𡚪 𡚫	<p>女 nǚ</p> <hr/> <p>〔附〕汝</p>  <p>一个女子跪坐着(古人席地而坐),双手温文地放在胸前。字的本义是“妇女”。“女”字在古文中常借为“汝”(音 rǔ,意思是“你”),后来才新造了“汝”字。</p>
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Here is a woman kneeling down, takes a submissive position.

男

19In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are,And to dust you shall return.”

𠂇 𠂈 𠂉 𠂊 𠂋 𠂌	<p>男 nán</p> <hr/>  <p>字由“田”、“力”两部分构成。“力”就是古农具“耒”(音 lěi, 参见“力”字条)。在田里耕作是古代男人的主要职责,因此用“田”、“力”来表示“男人”。</p>
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This part is field, this part is a plow. Which means, exactly what Bible tells us, man shall sweat and work hard to get food.

Since the fall of Eden Garden, God started his redemption plan. What does God do? Make Covenant with people, from Abram, Isaac and Jacob, to Jesus.



This word has 2 parts. Upper part has the meaning of brightness. Which means that the covenant needs to be open, known to the public. Lower part is blood. A covenant always need blood to establish. “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.” (1 Corinthian 11: 25)

Isn't language amazing? Paul said in Romans 1 “20For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,” If we believe words and language are created, then we should be able to see God's glory in language as well.

It is also recorded in an ancient book called 淮南子, that after Cang Jie created Chinese words, “天雨粟, 鬼夜哭”. Which means from Sky rained grains, and in the night spiritual beings cried. There are many explanations to this. If we explain this words from Bible's point view, is it possible that the Chinese words remind the spiritual beings, ie. the fallen angels, of the glorious days they were in Heaven before they follow Satan rebel against YHWH the creator? And they now they lived in such a pitiful situation that they are far far away from God's glory.

Now we studied the Chinese in Genesis, lets go one step further, and see if we can learn something as how to live together in church. Because church is the place that we as believers of Christ live together like one body, as Paul said in (1 Corinthians 12) and Ephesians 4 2-6 “bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

I choose 2 Chinese words “together” “peace, harmony”. Both words pronunciation are the same. Exactly same.

合” meaning, together as one, “合一”. This character has 2 parts, upper part symbolise walking, meeting; lower part is mouth. So Together meaning is when people meet, they kiss each other. I know many Chinese are surprised, because it seems so contradictory to our custom. But customs and cultural behaviour changes during the time.

Isn't this like a church. We come from different places, different families, speak different language, we look different, but we walk to each other and kiss in peace, we are a symbol of unity in Christ.

“Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.” (Romans 16:16)

Let's look another word “和”, meaning “harmony” and “peace”.

It is a picture of a group of reef pipe linked together formed a musical instrument like a pan flute. It symbolise different parts binding together producing harmonic sound.

In the church we are all different, yes, but when God bond us together, under the guidance of Holy Spirit we should all play our part of role, and produce beautiful harmonic music in order to praise God. Of course, we have different ideas, opinions, sometimes we argue, even quarrel fight against each other, because our differences.

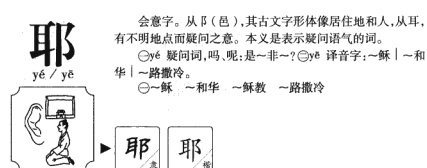
When we have disagreement, can we think about Jesus teaching “ Bless are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”. Can we remind us that the person who has different opinion to yours is also a child of God, that God also loves him. Let this word remind us that God bind different you and me together to produce beautiful music.

I want to conclude my message with the most important words in Bible “Jesus”. If a sermon doesn’t mention “Jesus”, it is not a good sermon, I was told before.

“耶稣”. There is no oracle of these 2 words. When Bible was first translated to Chinese in 19th century. I believe these 2 words were carefully chosen to reflect our faith in Jesus.

The pronunciation is “Ye Su”, which is very close to Jesus pronunciation in Hebrew “Yeshua”.

“耶” is a word not used for people’s name. It is formed in 2 parts, left is an ear, right means a city or places where people gathered. If it is not used for names, why early Christians in 19th century chose this word for Jesus name? Let me give you a hint of what I think. Matthew 28 , Mark 16 and Luke 24, Jesus biggest commandment to us is to go to the nations and let them hear the Gospel.



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Let’s look at “稣” 稣 2 parts, lower left is fish, lower right is grain, cereal, it is used in a words 禾场, means harvest field.

Why this word is chosen? Let me give you 2 verses.

Matthew 4 Jesus said to Simon Peter “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Matthew 9 “37Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. 38Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

Now we combine the meaning of this 2 words of “耶稣”, is it amazing that the name of Jesus in Chinese reflects what his commandment to us? Go to the nations, make them his disciple like nesting fish and harvest grain.

So 2023, what do we do as a church? Let’s walk together, love each other, kiss each other, and submit ourselves to one another, let God use us this year to produce the most beautiful music to praise His name, His Glory, His Kingdom.